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THE
WAY TO
A BLESSED E-
STATE IN
THIS LIFE.

BY
EZEKEL CULVERVELL.



LONDON
Printed by *John Dawson*, for
William Sheffard, and are to be
sold at his shop, at the entering
in of *Popes-head Alley* out
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By
JEREMY BENTHAM.



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HAT which our
Lord Iesus from
Heaven writ vn-
to the Church of
Sardis; *Thou hast
a name that thou lineſt; but art
dead,* may be truly ſpoken of the
greater ſort of not-counterfeit
Profellors of the Faith in our
time; for it is cleare by the Text,
that this is not ſpoken of hypo-
crites, who are ſtarke dead, but

Rev. 3. 1.

Many drow
sie profes-
sors.

of such who having some life remaining in them, are in a dead sleepe: for these of whom I speake, take good paines to keepe vp a name of Christianitie, both in the exercises of Religion, and in their outward behaviour, (though in both there be much fayling, but in very truth there is but a little life of faith and loue in all their Profession, as may appeare in their cold and vncomfortable prayers, in their wandering and drowsie hearing of the Word, and vnfruitfull receiving of the Sacraments, and much more in their abuse and neglect of the secret exercises of Prayer, reading, and meditation by themselves, and conference with others, seldome deeply bewailing their estate, lesse reioycing in the assurance of their salvation by Christ, as seldome delighting in God, with a zeale to set forth his glorie in every part of their

their life.

Though this be the ſtate of the greater part of thoſe that haue ſome truth of grace in them, yet may we ſay again, that there are with vs, (as in the Church of *Sardis*) *a few names that haue not defiled their garments*, that is, doe liue vnbu- kably, and walke worthy their holy calling, having a ſweet fee- ling of Gods favour vnto them, and ſo can boldly come vnto him in time of need, with aſſu- rance that he doth graciouſly reſpect them, their prayers, and vnfeigned obedience; who like- wiſe doe more delight them- ſelues in God, then in all earth- ly things, accounting it their greateſt griefe to offend him, and greateſt ioy to pleaſe him; poſſeſſing their ſoules with con- fidence and patience in their greateſt tryalls, looking for the appearing of Chriſt.

This is that bleſſed eſtate to be

A few wor-
thy.

What a
blessed life
here may
be attained.

Desire by
many, not
attained.

How this
life is attain-
ed.

injoyed in this life, which God hath prepared, (though in diuers measures) for the faithfull, all which may well be contained in this short sentence of the *Psalmist*. *Psal. 37. 4. Delight thy selfe in the Lord, and he will giue thee thy hearts desire* : which I doubt not but all true Christians (when they haue well considered it) would be glad to attaine vnto : But either through ignorance of the way how to attaine it ; or through negligence ; not putting in practise what they know : they spend many yeares, either securely, or vncomfortably ; seldome attaining to that heavenly feasting, which (if they were wise.) might be their daily refreshing : whose estate I much tendring, doe endeavour to shew them, how this happie life may be attained ; which I conceiue to be only by a more plentifull feeding vpon Christ by faith. It is without que-

question, that all and every part
of our spirituall life is in Christ,
of whose fulnesse we receiue grace
for grace: and this is as cleare,
that we receiue no grace first or
last from Christ, but by belee-
ving: in which respect Christ is
truely and principally said to be
our spirituall food, and belee-
ving, to be the true feeding vpon
him. Which being so, it ne-
cessarily followes, that feeding
seldome, or weakly; we cannot
haue much spirituall strength:
and otherwise feeding plenti-
fully and soundly, wee shall be
fat, and flourishing in grace, and
so attaine vnto the blessed life
spoken of.

For the better vnderstanding
and practising whereof, this is
specially to be considered, How
every true beleeuer may daily,
yea, oft in the day, by faith feed
vpon Christ, that so he may re-
ceiue from him all spirituall
nourishment, for his refreshing

Ioh. 1. 16.

Ioh. 6. 27.

35.

34.

How to
feed oft in
the day on
Christ,

and strengthening to every good worke.

This is done by setting before vs those sweet promises, which God hath made to vs, for the strengthening of our faith in all our necessities : and, so particularly to apply them to our selues. Whereby we may comfortably assure our selues, that we shall enioy that which God hath promised. Wherein we are first to get the true meaning of that which is promised.

Secondly, To see we haue a good warrant, that this is promised to vs, that thereupon we may conclude, we shall certainly enioy that which God hath promised, seeing he is faithfull who hath promised.

Example.

But seeing this is not well conceived by many, I will make it plaine by example. 1. Cor. 1. 30. it is said ; *But of him are yee in Christ Iesus, who of God is made vnto vs wisdom, and righteousness,*

nesse, and sanctification, and redemption. In which is as much said as may be conceived, or desired; the meaning whereof is, that every true beleever, is by Gods spirit made a living member of Christ Iesus, from and in whom, he is made by God a true partaker of all things needfull to salvation: that whereas he is by nature foolish, guiltie, filthy, and in bondage, now in Christ he is made perfectly wise, righteous, holy, freed from all his enemies, and so restored to full happinesse. This promise of God being clearly vnderstood, must now be applyed particularly by every beleever to himselfe, thus: Seeing God who is all-sufficient, and faithfull, hath in his Word, which is Truth it selfe, promised these great benefits (in which all are contained) to every true beleever, therefore I who doe truly, though weakely, beleue in Christ,

Christ, may boldly assure my selfe, that all these be mine, and therefore I shall not want any thing needfull for my present comfort, or eternall happinellse. Which whosoever doth daily practise in this manner to maintaine, and increase his faith by application of this, and all other of Gods promises, he shall daily more and more enioy in this life that blessed estate we speake of.

Pray for
faith.

But for as much as faith is the gift of God, and we cannot further beleue then wee be drawne by Gods spirit, therefore we must ioyne often, and seruent prayer; that God by this meanes would increase our faith.

Not easie.

This may seeme easie to be performed, but vpon better tryall, it will not be found so easie to doe it effectually, for besides our owne great vntowardnells to beleue, I cannot thinke
of

of any dutie, wherein our common Adverſary, will uſe more cunning, and diligence to hinder vs, then in this: either by keeping vs from the worke, or beguiling vs in it: whereby it comes to paſſe, that very few doe (to any good purpoſe) praſtiſe the ſame.

Amongſt many lettes which hinder the faithfull praſtiſe hereof, I obſerve theſe two, in two divers ſorts of beleevers.

The former in thoſe, who not ſufficiently feeling their wants, and too much contented with their eſtate, doe not ſo prize Chriſt, and this bleſſed eſtate in him, as may move them to take this paines, and therefore never reach vnto this growth in grace, whereunto they might come, if the fault were not in themſelves. The other let, is in thoſe who highly prizing the benefit, and earneſtly labouring for it, are by the ſenſe of their owne

Two chiefe
lettes.

1. Not pri-
zing Chriſt

2. Our vn-
worthines.

vn-

vnworthineſſe, ſo kept downe, that they cannot with any hope looke vp, for ſo great a bleſſing.

Remoue of
the firſt let.

For the removing of both theſe lettes, the firſt ſort are to bethinke themſelues, what an vncomfortable account it will be, when God ſhall call them to it, to ſee how many yeares they haue ſpent, with little growth in grace, either to the glorie of God, or good example to others, or to the peace of their owne ſoules. Whereas on the other ſide, they might haue attained vnto ſuch a ſweet life, as would haue bene a heaven vpon earth; namely, *To reioyce alwayes in the Lord.*

Of the ſe-
cond let.

For the other poore ſoules, who are kept downe with the ſenſe of their owne vnworthineſſe, they are to know, that all Gods promiſes, are free and vnderſerved, ſo as no vnworthineſſe ought to hinder them from be-
leeving:

leaving: yea, rather they that
haue the most sense of their
owne vnworthinelle, haue most
incouragement to beleue, for
that voyce of Christ, *Come vnto
me all you that are weary and bea-
rie laden, and I will ease you,*
serues not onely for our first
conversion, but in all our di-
stresses whatsoeuer, throughout
the whole course of our life.

If any escape both these lets,
and goe about this worke, then
will Satan vse all his skill to be-
guile both sorts: such as are
weake and heauie hearted,
sone discouraged, he tempts
and perswades, they labour in
vaine, and doe not beleue,
when indeed they doe, as shall
appeare. The other sort who
are too well conceited, and light
hearted, Satan labours to per-
swade, that they haue more
faith then indeed they haue, and
that their case is better then in
truth it is.

Mat. 11. 28.

Satan will
beguile;

Some, that
they be-
leue not;

Others, that
they haue
more faith
then they
haue.

Four
markes of
faith not
seene.

1. Griefe
for want of
faith.
2. Constant
labour for
it.
3. True
loue to
God.

It shall be therefore the wise-
dome of all who will not be de-
ceived, carefully to examine &
try themselves; which that they
may the better doe, let them
consider of these markes that
follow: whereby either for
may certainly iudge of them-
selues.

For such as conscientiously
devout to nourish their faith in
such manner as hath bene
shewed, and yet finde no com-
fort, but feare they doe not be-
leeue, (when as indeede they
doe), these are to discern their
faith by such secret operations,
as doe certainly shew faith to
be there, though it be not seene:
namely, An unfeigned griefe
for the want of faith, with an
unceasing indyovour for the at-
taining of it. Againe, A reve-
rent esteeme of God, and heartie
affection of unfeigned loue to
him, which cannot be without
some former apprehension of
Gods

Gods loue to them, which is in many, (though they see it not). And lastly, A tender Conscience, feating to displease God, even in smaller matters, which others little regard. Whosoever shall finde these fruits, (which cannot come but from faith) may certainly know, that there is a roote of faith grounded in their hearts, though they see it not. But such as haue no feeling of their faith, and see no such effects in their liues, haue iust cause to thinke that they haue no faith at all.

As for the other sort, who are too well perswaded of themselves, that they finde comfort in meditating on Gods promises, whereas indeed they deceiue themselves, and haue not that faith they imagine, as their fruits doe shew.

This may be discerned by these notes;

First, True comfort is vsually

4. A tender conscience.

No fruits, no faith.

Notes of true and false comfort,

1. True, is hardly got.

ly very hardly gotten, with much prayer and labour, and it is oft a long time before this be felt: therefore they who vpon their first thoughts on these promises, finde comfort that they haue part in them, may so farre mistrust, all is not sound, till they shall see some better prooffe thereof: which if they doe not, but for all this will be confident, that all is well, it is to be feared, their comfort is not sound.

2. Feare of deceit,

For this is another propertie of that true comfort which springs from faith, especially in young and weake beleevers, that they (so highly valewing the benefit,) are very fearefull of being deceived, and must see good evidence before they will be perswaded, that they haue this saving faith.

3. Poore in spirit, mourne, and lowly.

Whereof if they shall be perswaded, yet therewithal is ioyned such a feeling of the weakenesse of

of their faith, and so of all grace,
as makes them poore in their
owne eyes, & mourne for their
wantes, thinking lowly of them-
selues, and more highly reve-
rencing the graces of God in o-
thers. Whereas they who be de-
ceived, are as the *Laodiceans*,
rich and wanting nothing, and
so be merry, and too light hear-
ted, thinking too well of them-
selues, and too slenderly of o-
thers, better then themselves.

Another sure marke of sensi-
ble faith and comfort, is this,
That they that haue tasted of it,
can never be satisfied, but still
hunger and labour for more:
none more diligently vse all
good meanes to grow in grace
then they. Even as the strong
and most healthfull bodie, doth
feed better then the weake and
sickly. But such as being well
satisfied with that they haue, &
feele no hunger, nor labour for
more, it is evident their faith

and

and

4. Hunger
and labour
for more.

5. Answerable obedience.

and comfort are not good. To proceed, and not to gather all that might be added here, this shall serve for all. That as like fire, like heate, so like faith, like life, great or small. So that where there is strong faith, there must needs be great obedience, and therefore whosoever he be that is careless of his conversation, and barren in the fruits of a holy life, his faith must needs be weake, if not dead.

Wherefore to conclude, I advise every one, who by these markes shall discern himselfe to be deceived, with fancie instead of faith; to goe about this worke more seriously, and to lay a better foundation of faith, and not to say, he hath found comfort, till he can bring good witness thereof. Which whosoever shall neglect, shall in the end (to say no more) lament his folly, when he who seeing his error, shall more carefully and con-

Exposit. p.
mod. bas
anom. 101

constantly put in practise this
maine dutie of daily feeding vp-
on Christ; shall grow in grace,
and attaine to that blessed life
here, whereof we speake,
besides eternall life,
the full reward
of all his
labours.
(.:.)

F I N I S.
